

The influence of goal-related financial objectives on employees' motivation: a study of French call-centres

Dr. Maryline BOURDIL
Assistant Professor

Groupe Sup de Co Montpellier
2300, Avenue des Moulins
34185 Montpellier cedex 4
France
Mail : m.bourdil@supco-montpellier.fr
Phone number : +33 (0)4 67 10 26 49

Dr. Calin GURAU
Associate Professor

Groupe Sup de Co Montpellier
2300, Avenue des Moulins
34185 Montpellier cedex 4
France
Mail : c.gurau@supco-montpellier.fr
Phone number : +33 (0)4 67 10 28 46

Introduction

In general, both in the private and in the public sector the use of goal-related financial incentives is developing. This method of payment is particularly used for commercial professions, but in the last five years, its application was extended for other categories of personnel. These financial incentives are given to a person or a team for the attained performance in achieving a series of defined objectives, providing the possibility to balance the flexibility to human resource management with the requirements for increasing productivity. The empirical studies realised by Lee (1998) and Oliver and Anderson (1994, 1995) show that a variable payment directly connected with work performance can represent an important source of motivation. However, the impact of this variable on motivation can vary, which raises the problem of creating the appropriate conditions for maximising work motivation. Justice, equity and objectives represent important variables influencing motivation (Adams, 1963 and 1965; Greenberg, 1986 and 1987 ; Locke, 1968 ; Locke and Latham, 1990). This study attempts to analyse the link between these variables and work motivation for 118 employees in seven French call centres. The relevance of this study is increased by the specific importance of goal-related financial incentives in call centres, in comparison with other types of enterprises. Bain and Taylor (1999) and Brown and Maxwell (2002) indicate that a specific characteristic of call centres is the high level of control of employees' activities (Lab-Ho, 2001).

The majority of the call centres investigated in this study use a goal-related financial incentives that take into account both the individual and the team performance, but also quantitative and qualitative elements of evaluation. This type of financial incentives has not been studied before, which enhances the importance of this study for the understanding of personnel motivation.

After a presentation of the main theories which explain the effect of financial incentives on motivation, a series of research hypotheses are defined and discussed. The research methodology applied to collect primary data is then discussed. The results are presented and analysed in direct relation to the formulated research objectives. The paper ends with a summary of the main findings and implications.

Literature review

Vallerand and Thill (1993, p 18) define motivation as ‘a hypothetical construct used to describe the internal and/or external forces which determine the initiation, direction, intensity and persistence of behaviour’. In this study, motivation is investigated considering the way in which equity, justice, work objectives, the feeling of self-efficacy and the feedback influence the effectiveness of goal-related financial objectives.

Goal-related financial incentives

The goal related financial objectives are used to reward an employee or a team of employees if they succeed to successfully achieve the established objectives. These incentives are different from commissions, although both of them can be applied for individuals or teams (Donnadieu, 1993; Saint-Onge et al, 1998; Sire and David, 1993). Their main differences between these two methods of payment are the following:

- (1) The financial incentives depend only on the achievement of the established objectives, being included in a complex performance evaluation system (Darmon, 2001; Taylor and Pierce, 1999).
- (2) The commissions are mainly quantitative while the financial incentives can be quantitative, qualitative or mixed. Sometimes the behaviour of employees can be related with the financial incentive. Therefore, it can be said that commissions are more connected with results, while the financial incentives are considering performance. (Anderson and Oliver, 1987).

Taking into account the flexibility and the complexity of goal-related financial objectives, the firm can use them as a powerful instrument for motivating the employees both from the point of view of results (quantitative criteria) and performance (qualitative criteria).

The activity of call-centres employees is a team work. Balkin and Montemayor (2000) define the team as a limited number of employees that have complementary expertise and skills and who perceive a collective responsibility toward the other team members. Team members interact regularly, their number varying between 2 and 25.

Few studies have investigated the mechanism of financial rewards in commercial teams, although this selling method becomes more popular (Brown et al, 2005). The main problem of team rewards is the fact that all team members receive the same reward, regardless their individual performance. According to Lopez et al (2006) this raises some important research questions such as: which are the payment methods better adapted for team selling? The goal-related team incentives are not exempted from the criticism. On one hand, if we consider the theory of equity, these rewards could represent a source of dissatisfaction for the best performing employees, because their individual performance would be lost within team performance, preventing them to receive an equitable reward. Previous studies confirm this situation. Shaw et al (2001) show that the best performing employees prefer individual rather than group rewards. The research conducted by Guthrie (2000) and de Park et al (1994) demonstrate that when confronted with equalitarian group rewards, the best performing employees often choose to separate from the team and work individually. On the other hand, group rewards tend to protect and favour the less performing members (Brown et al, 1999; Wageman and Baker, 1997). This situation will reduce the motivation of the best performing employees (Brown et al, 1999), who will tend to reduce the effort invested for goal achievement (Guthrie, 2000; Zobel, 1999). The study realised by Ezzamel and Willmott (1998) on group financial incentives highlights the negative conformity of the best performing employees. In this context, the application of individual or mixed rewards may represent a better solution to increase employees' motivation.

Equity

The equity seems to be a condition sine qua non for the existence of motivation (Cadin et al, 2004; Peretti, 2004). The system of payments and rewards must give to every employee the feeling of being treated to his/her just value. Usually, each employee compares his/her contribution/remuneration with the payment received by colleagues for their contribution, either within the enterprise (internal equity) or in other similar firms (external equity). This ratio effort/results can determine either positive or negative reactions, in relation to the level of perceived inequity. In order to reduce the psychological tension created by this feeling of inequity, the employee can either adopt a new behaviour (adapting his/her efforts, leaving the firm, asking for a promotion or an increase in salary, etc.), or change his/her perceptions about the situation (use other people as reference, change the psychological evaluation of his/her contribution or remuneration, or modify this evaluation for the people taken as

reference). This theory provides an insight about the effect of the perceived internal and external equity on the level of employees' motivation.

The relationship between equity and motivation was already studied by several authors, but the findings are contradictory. Flood et al (2001) indicate that equity has a positive effect on the willingness to make an additional effort for achieving the established objectives. However, this effect varies among employees – the individualist people seem to make more efforts when they perceive an equitable situation (Flood et al, 2001). In contrast with Flood et al (2001), Roussel (1996) argues that internal and external equity have no effect on employees motivation.

Despite the contrasting empirical results of the previous studies, the following research hypotheses are formulated on the basis of the equity theory (Adams, 1963 and 1965):

H1: The perceived value of the goal-related financial objective in relation with work colleagues (internal equity) has a positive impact on the efforts made by employees to achieve the established objective.

H2: The perceived value of the goal-related financial incentive received by the employee in relation to the value of similar incentives received by the employees of other similar firms (external equity) has a positive impact on the efforts made by employees to achieve the established objective.

Justice

As expressed in the definition of Folger and Cropanzano (1998), organisational justice refers to the rules and social norms that are applied within the firm in relation to the distribution of internal resources and advantages (distributive justice), to the processes and procedures that determine this distribution (procedural justice), and to the interpersonal relations within the firm (interactional justice). The individual perception regarding the organisational justice reflects the judgement made by a person in relation to one or more of the three dimensions of justice presented above.

The theory of distributive justice (Greenberg, 1986 and 1987) outlines that a person can use both personal and exchange-related references in order to evaluate a distributive process (Goodman, 1974). These references are person-specific and are different from the ratio between personal contribution and personal retribution. For example, the perception can be determined by a comparison between the present ratio and the ratio related with a previous professional situation. On the other hand, in what concerns the references linked to the exchange process, they usually correspond to the implicit and explicit contractual conditions established between employer and employee. For example, when entering a new institution the employee can be motivated by the promises made in relation to future incentives, which will determine his/her evaluation of the exchange process.

The procedural justice refers to the procedures implemented for taking decisions related to the attribution of rewards. These procedures include, for example, the system of performance evaluation, the process of professional advancement, the procedures for appeal, as well as the participation to the decision-taking process.

Interactional justice is composed according to Greenberg (1990 and 1993) of two main dimensions: the interpersonal justice – which depends on treating the employees with dignity, and the informational justice – which is determined by the information provided by managers to their employees, concerning matters of interest.

This theory is important for understanding the effects determined by the goal-related financial incentives: if a person perceives these incentives in conformity with distributive, procedural and interactional justice, this person will be more motivated to attain the established goals.

Very few researchers have studied the relation between the perceived justice of goal-related financial incentives and employees' motivation. The empirical results of Bordachar-Laval (2003) do not confirm the initial theory of justice, because the positive relationship between the distributive and procedural justice of the team financial incentive and the efforts made individually and collectively by the team members is not validated.

Despite these empirical results we develop the following research hypotheses in relation to the theory of justice (Greenberg, 1986 and 1987):

H3: Distributive justice has a positive impact on employees' motivation.

H4: Procedural justice has a positive impact on employees' motivation.

H5: The perceived meaning of the communication concerning the characteristics of the goal-oriented financial incentive (informational justice) has a positive impact on motivation.

H6: The perceived meaning of the communication concerning the goal-related financial incentives that have been allocated to other employees (interpersonal justice) has a positive impact on motivation.

Work objectives

The goal-related financial objectives are closely related with a system of work objectives. In fact, the incentives are allocated only if the established work objectives have been achieved. Therefore, it is also necessary to take into account the specific characteristics of the work objectives as a condition for incentive scheme's success.

The theory of objectives (Locke, 1968; Locke and Latham, 1990) states that the content and the intensity of the objective will significantly influence the motivation of employees. The content of the objective represents the object or the desired result of the activity, and can be different from one employee to the other. In reality an employee has always a series of objectives to achieve, more or less numerous, with different time horizons, and with various degrees of difficulty. On the other hand, the content of the objective can be more or less clear and coherent for the employee. Most of the previous research on the content of objectives has focused on goal specificity and goal difficulty, and the results are consistently proving the importance of these two dimensions for employee's motivation.

On the other hand, the intensity of the objective is related with the place of the objective in the goal hierarchy of the individual, with the level of individual implication for goal

achievement and with the importance attached to the objective. Since very few studies have investigated this issue, which is difficult to quantify and evaluate objectively, this dimension of objectives will not be taken into account in this study.

The findings of the previous studies regarding the influence of objective on employees' motivation are not convergent. The research of Bordachar-Laval (2003) partly confirms the theory of goal definition (Locke, 1968; Locke and Latham, 1990): the findings related with goal difficulty contradict the initial theory, while the results regarding goal specificity confirm it. The main difference is related with the specificity of team versus individual goal definition. While the level of difficulty of the team goals does not influence the efforts made by team members, the clearly specific goals motivate the employees both at individual and at group level.

The findings obtained by Lee et al (1997) refine the conclusions of the initial theory. The experiment realised by Lee et al (1997) indicate that in the case of goal-related financial incentives, the employees that are given goal with a medium level of difficulty perform better than those with easy or very difficult objectives. On the other hand, in the case of commission payments, the best performing employees are the ones that have the most difficult objectives.

Finally, the results obtained by London (1976) confirm the initial theory, establishing a positive relationship between employees' performance and goal difficulty.

Despite the contradictory findings of previous studies, the following research hypotheses are formulated in direct relation with the theory of objective definition:

H7: The difficulty of the work objective has a positive impact on motivation.

H8: The specificity of the work objective has a positive impact on motivation.

Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy can be defined as the belief of a person in his/her capacity to attain his/her objectives. This variable interacts with the specific characteristics of work objectives,

influencing the level of motivation and performance. Therefore, the motivating force of goal-related financial incentives is determined not only by work objectives, but also by individual factors such as self-efficacy. The theory of work objectives (Locke and Latham, 1990) is thus complemented and completed by theory of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1986, 1991). This theory improves the comprehension of the effects induced by goal-related financial incentives, stating that the belief of a person in his/her self-efficacy will positively influence his/her work motivation.

These assumptions are validated by the findings of the previous studies Bordachar-Laval (2003), but only in relation with the feeling of personal self-efficacy. The collective belief in the self-efficacy of the team is not considered. Therefore the findings of this study state that: (1) The belief of employees in their individual self-efficacy has a positive impact on their individual efforts to contribute to the achievement of team objectives. (2) The collective belief in the group efficacy does not influence the efforts made by individual employees to contribute to the achievement of team objectives. (3) The collective belief in the group efficacy does not influence the collective efforts made to contribute to the achievement of team objectives. The meta-analysis of 62 research articles realised by Wofford et al (1992) outlines that self-efficacy is an antecedent of the willingness to achieve the established objectives. The experiment conducted by Lee et al (1997) indicates that self-efficacy has a significant influence on performance.

Therefore, the following research hypothesis can be formulated:

H9: The feeling of self-efficacy has a positive impact on motivation.

The feed-back provided in relation to the achievement of work objectives

The feedback consists in providing the employees information concerning their work performance. The feedback can be realised through various methods, such as a coaching, when the manager informs frequently the employee on the positive and negative aspects of his/her work (Bartol, 1999).

Smoot and Duncan (1997) argue on the basis of the existing empirical evidence that the feedback connected with variable payment can increase the performance of employees. This statement is validated by Bordachar-Laval (2003) who indicates that the feedback represents a source of motivation. Kim (1984) also concludes that the feedback has a positive effect on performance. The results obtained by Lowery et al (2002) regarding the use of goal-related financial incentives indicate that the managers should put a lesser accent on the participation of employees to objective definition, but in exchange they should spend more time to ensure the quality of these objectives and to provide frequent feedback information to employees.

This proposition improves the understanding of the way in which goal-related financial incentives can have an effect on motivation. Therefore, the feedback connected with a goal-related financial incentive should have a positive effect on employees' performance.

On the basis of the previous studies, the following research hypothesis can be formulated:

H10: The feedback has a positive impact on motivation.

The formulated research hypotheses have been verified using multiple linear regression analysis. The results obtained are presented in the following sections.

Research methodology

A sample of 118 employees randomly selected from seven call centres (frozen foods, nutraceuticals, bank, telecommunications, accessories and rented cars) have been used to collect primary data. 74.1% of these respondents were women, and 15.9% men. Most of them (56%) had less than 30 years, and 12.9% were older than 46 years. 67.7% of them had more than three years of working experience in the call centre.

Call centres represent a very interesting, but largely unknown research field. The number of call centres, as well as the number of employees hired by these organisations is constantly growing, and their activity becomes more professional. In most call centres the payments are composed of two parts: one fix, and the other variable, in relation to pre-defined goals. The internal ($\alpha = 0.7349$) and external ($\alpha = 0.7543$) equity have been measured using the scale developed by Livingstone et al (1995); while distributive justice ($\alpha = 0.9166$), informational justice ($\alpha = 0.89$) and interpersonal justice ($\alpha = 0.9379$) have been measured applying the

scale of Colquitt (2001). Procedural justice ($\alpha = 0.9166$) was evaluated through the first two items of the scale developed by Bordachar-Laval (2003). Goal difficulty was measured ($\alpha = 0.6128$) using three items of the scale of Locke and Latham (1990), goal specificity ($\alpha = 0.6035$) through the scale of Steers (1975, 1976), the feedback ($\alpha = 0.9342$) and the individual feeling of self-efficacy ($\alpha = 0.7106$) through the scale of Bordachar-Laval (2003).

The formulated hypotheses have been verified using multiple linear regressions realised with the statistical software SPSS.

Internal and external equity

The level of equity perceived by call centres employees is medium (average of 2.7193 and respectively 2.8088). This indicates the existence of a possibility to improve the two perceptions, since a medium level of external equity can determine personal turnover, while the perceived internal equity may represent a source of social tension between team members.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics - equity

Variable	Observations	Average	Standard deviation
Internal equity	Valid: 57 Missing: 61	2,7193	1,08157
External equity	Valid: 68 Missing: 50	2,8088	,95037

Two research hypotheses have been formulated in relation to the existing literature. In a first phase, the correlation between variables has been calculated (see Table 2).

Table 2. The correlation between the two aspects of the equity and employees' motivation

	Motivation
Internal equity	0.247**
External equity	0.453***

** the correlation is significant to the level of 0.05 (unilateral)

*** the correlation is significant to the level of 0.01 (unilateral)

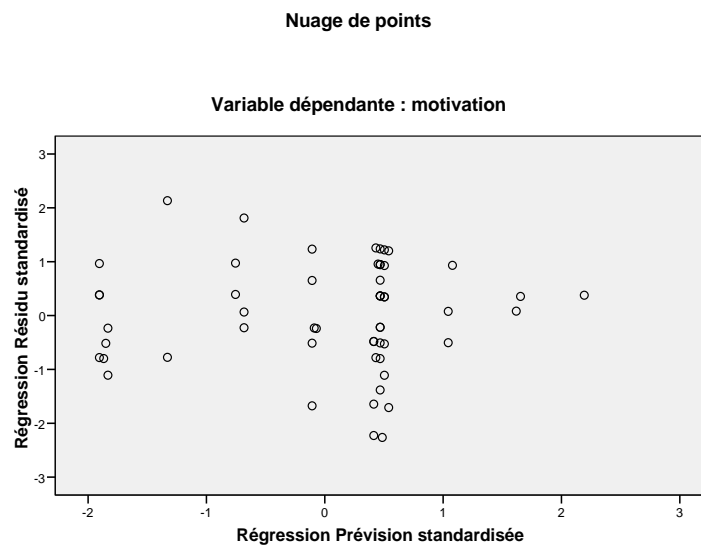
Before calculating the multiple linear regression, it is necessary to verify the conditions concerning the linearity and the homogeneity of the variance. As it can be seen from table 3, the standardised residues are comprised in the [-3; 3] interval.

Table 3. The standardised residues of the linear regression between equity and motivation

	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Standard deviation	N
Predicted	2,2273	4,5678	3,3152	,57121	55
Residual	-2,59274	2,44423	,00000	1,12424	55
Standardised prediction	-1,904	2,193	,000	1,000	55
Standardised residue	-2,263	2,133	,000	,981	55

The diagram of the standardised residues does not show any particular pattern, confirming the necessary conditions regarding the linearity and the homogeneity of variances.

Graph 1. The standardised residues of the linear regression between equity and motivation



The results of the multiple linear regression are displayed in Table 4.

Table 4. The results of the multiple regression multiple between equity and motivation

Motivation

	β	t	ρ	Adjusted R ²
Internal equity	0.017	0.119	0.906(ns)	0.175
External equity	0.444	3.073	0.003***	

(ns): the coefficient of regression is not statistically significant (bilateral Student test)

***: the coefficient of regression is statistically significant at the level of 0.01 (bilateral Student test)

Considering the relation between equity and motivation, the value of the adjusted R² coefficient indicated that 17.5% of the variance of motivation is explained by the two independent variables. The correlation between the perception of the internal equity and motivation is 0.247. However, the Student test gives a value of 0.119 which is weaker than 1.96. Because of this, it is not possible to prove the existence of a positive connection between internal equity and employees' motivation. Hypothesis H1 is therefore rejected.

The correlation between the perceived amount of the goal-related incentive considered in relation to other firms' employees (external equity) and motivation shows a value of 0.453. These results permit the application of a linear test between the two variables. The Student test shows a value of 3.073, which validates the influence of external equity on motivation. Considering that the regression coefficient is 0.444 it is possible to conclude that external motivation has an important effect on employees' motivation. Therefore, hypothesis H2 is validated.

The perception of employees regarding the existence of a moderate level of internal and external equity can create both social tensions within the team as well as staff turnover. The employees tend to compare their own reward not only with the rewards received by their colleagues but also with the incentives provided by other similar enterprises. The result of this comparison has an impact on their level of motivation, especially in what concern external equity.

The organisational justice

The distributive and procedural justice has a relatively low level (average: 2.5770), demonstrating that some improvements should be done regarding the correctness of the goal-related incentive and of the reward distributed to employees. The informational justice has a moderate level (average: 2.9457), which indicates that the quality of internal communication

of the team manager can be improved. The level of interpersonal justice is high (average: 4.2500), which shows that employees have the impression that their team manager treat them well, regardless of their goal-related incentives. In these conditions, the suggestions of the team manager can be considered as relevant and constructive by the team members.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics – organisational justice

Variable	Observations	Average	Standard deviation
Distributive and procedural justice	Valid: 106 Missing : 12	2.5770	1.00821
Informational justice	Valid: 92 Missing: 26	2.9457	1.04455
Interpersonal justice	Valid: 107 Missing: 11	4.2500	.98575

During the analysis of the literature review three specific dimensions of justice have been identified (distributive and procedural justice, informational justice, and interpersonal justice). Therefore, three relations have to be tested using multiple regression analysis. In a first phase, the correlation between variables has been calculated (see Table 6).

Table 6. The correlation between the three aspects of justice and employees’ motivation

	Motivation
Distributive and procedural justice	0,202**
Informational justice	0,303***
Interpersonal justice	0,351***

** the correlation is significant to the level of 0.05 (unilateral)

*** the correlation is significant to the level of 0.01 (unilateral)

Before calculating the multiple linear regression, it is necessary to verify the conditions concerning the linearity and the homogeneity of the variance. As it can be seen from table 3, the standardised residues are comprised in the [-3; 3] interval.

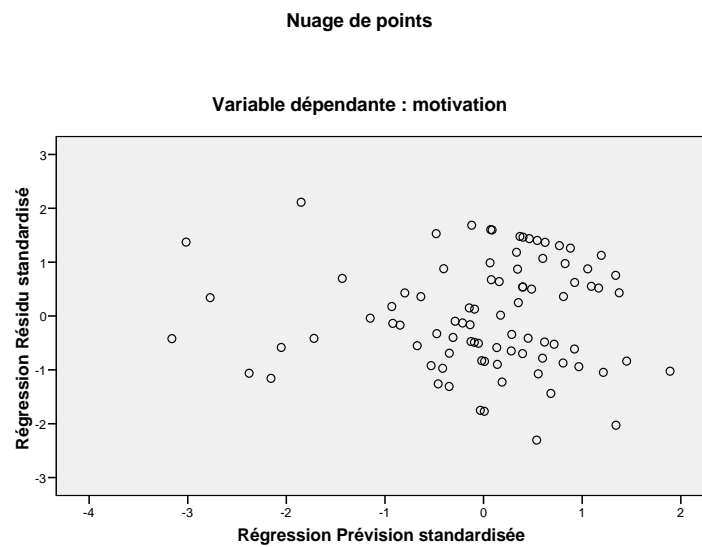
Table 7. The standardised residues of the linear regression between justice and motivation

	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Standard deviation	N
Predicted	1.7870	4.1054	3.2375	.45889	87
Residual	-2.48453	2.27787	.00000	1.05949	87
Standardised	-3.161	1.891	.000	1.000	87

prediction					
Standardised	-2.304	2.112	.000	.982	87
residue					

The diagram of the standardised residues does not show any particular pattern, confirming the necessary conditions regarding the linearity and the homogeneity of variances.

Graph 2. The standardised residues of the linear regression between justice and motivation



The results of the multiple linear regression are displayed in Table 8.

Table 8. The results of the multiple regression multiple between justice and motivation

	Motivation			
	β	t	ρ	R ² ajusté
Distributive and procedural justice	0.154	1.419	0.159(ns)	0.128
Informational justice	0.076	0.567	0.572(ns)	
Interpersonal justice	0.295	2.328	0.022**	

(ns): the coefficient of regression is not statistically significant (bilateral Student test)

** : the coefficient of regression is statistically significant at the level of 0.05 (bilateral Student test)

The adjusted R² coefficient indicate that 12.8% of the variance of motivation is determined by the independent variables of justice. The correlation between procedural/distributive justice and motivation is 0.202, but the coefficient t of the Student test is not significant. Therefore the hypothesis of a positive effect of the distributive/procedural justice on motivation is rejected.

The relationship between informational justice and motivation is correlated at 0.303, but again, the Student test does not show a statistical significance. Because of this, the research hypothesis H5 is rejected.

On the other hand, the Student test shows that the correlation between interpersonal justice and motivation is statistically significant to a level of 0.351, which demonstrate a strong positive influence of this variable on employees' motivation. Therefore, hypothesis H6 is validated.

The results indicate that the behaviour of the team manager with team members is essential for developing and maintaining employees' motivation. The employees must be treated with dignity and respect, in order to perceive the remarks and the suggestions of the team manager as constructive feedback.

Work objectives

The individual feeling of self-efficacy has a high level among the investigated employees (average: 4.2353). On the other hand, goal specificity and difficulty are perceived as medium (average of 2.9649 and respectively 2.7661). Finally, the feedback, which represents the frequency of information transfer to employees is sufficient (average of 2.5245).

Table 9. Descriptive statistics concerning work objectives

Variable	Frequency	Mean	Standard deviation
Self-efficacy	Valid: 68 Missing: 50	4.2353	.59867
The difficulty of the objective	Valid: 57 Missing: 61	2.9649	.91218
Specificity of the	Valid: 67	2.7661	.54177

objective	Missing: 51		
Feedback	Valid: 68	2.5245	1.01124
	Missing: 50		

The correlation between the independent variables and motivation are displayed in Table 10.

Table 10. The correlations between the work objectives variables and motivation

	Motivation
Goal difficulty	-0.449***
Goal specificity	0.320**
Self-efficacy	0.243**
Feedback	-0.246**

(ns): the correlation is not statistically significant (unilateral)

***: the correlation is statistically significant to a level of 0.01 (unilateral)

** : the correlation is statistically significant to a level of 0.05 (unilateral)

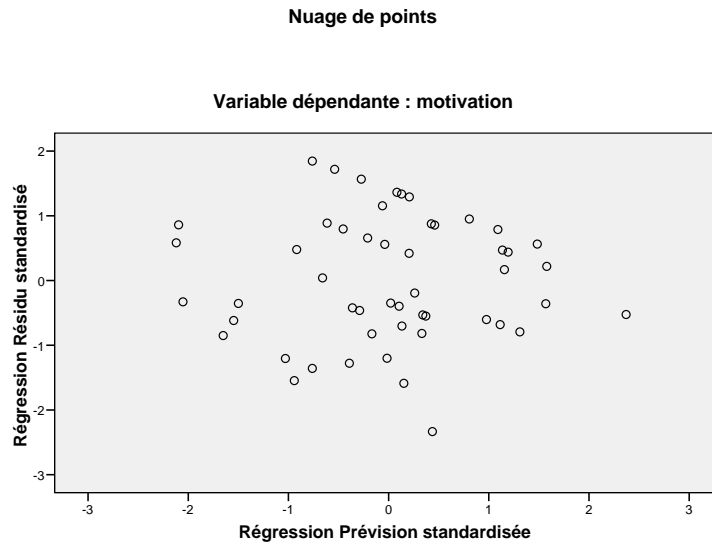
The four research hypotheses formulated in relation to the work objectives have been verified using a multiple regression method. In a first phase, it is necessary to verify if the conditions of linearity and homogeneity of variances are satisfied. The results from Table 11 indicate that the standardised residues are comprised within the [-3; 3] interval.

Table 11. The standardised residues of the linear regression between work objectives and motivation

	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Standard deviation	N
Predicted	2.0005	4.9352	3.3856	.65357	51
Residual	-2.67154	2.11215	.00000	1.09800	51
Standardised prediction	-2.119	2.371	.000	1.000	51
Standardised residue	-2.334	1.845	.000	.959	51

The diagram of the standardised residues does not show any particular pattern, confirming the necessary conditions regarding the linearity and the homogeneity of variances.

Graph 3. The standardised residues of the linear regression between work objectives and motivation



The results of the multiple linear regression are displayed in Table 12.

Table 12. The results of the multiple regression multiple between work objectives and motivation

	Motivation			
	β	t	ρ	R ² ajusté
Goal difficulty	-0.385	-2.864	0.006***	0.197
Goal specificity	0.165	1.117	0.270 (ns)	
Self-efficacy	0.038	0.263	0.794 (ns)	
Feedback	-0.110	-0.735	0.466 (ns)	

(ns): the coefficient of regression is not statistically significant (bilateral Student test)

***: the coefficient of regression is statistically significant at the level of 0.01 (bilateral Student test)

The four independent variables defined in relation to work objectives are explaining 19.7% of the variance of motivation.

The correlation between goal difficulty and motivation is negative (-0.449), but the Student t test does not indicate a statistically significant relationship between these two variables. Hypothesis H7 is therefore rejected.

Although a relatively strong relationship of 0.320 exists between goal specificity and motivation, the T coefficient does not indicate a statistically significant link. Hypothesis H8 is thus rejected.

The correlation between feedback and motivation has a negative value -0.110, but the T coefficient does not show a statistically significant relationship. Hypothesis H10 is rejected.

Finally, the relatively strong positive correlation between the feeling of self-efficacy and motivation, the T coefficient does not indicate a statistically significant relationship. Therefore, hypothesis H9 is rejected.

The objectives perceived as very difficult reduce the motivation of employees. This result is contradicting the findings of Bordachar-Laval (2003) and London (1976), but confirms the conclusions developed by Lee et al (1997), who argue that the existence of an inverted U relationship between the goal difficulty and employees' performance. Therefore, the best performance can be achieved by people confronted with medium level objective, rather than by employees who experience too difficult or too easy objectives. However, it is necessary to consider the specificity of our research field, and restrict these conclusions only to call centre employees. Considering that within call centres the evaluation of goals is often made on a daily basis, the objectives that are too difficult may have an oppressing effect.

Conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate the conditions that enhance the use of goal-related financial incentives as a source of motivation. In this context, the relationship between justice, equity and work objectives on employees' motivation was analysed and discussed.

The contribution of this study to the development of academic literature is based on the following elements:

1. The empirical results of previous studies regarding the effect of equity, goal difficulty and goal specificity on motivation are contradictory.
2. Very few researchers have studied the effect of justice on goal-related incentives.

3. The research field investigated – call centres – is original. Very few studies have investigated this research field, because of significant access barriers. On the other hand, the study of call centres is extremely relevant for analysing the effect of goal-related financial incentives on employees' motivation.
4. The call centres studies in this project are using mixt financial incentives, based on both individual and team performance, and on the other hand taken into account quantitative and qualitative criteria of evaluation. Until now, no research was conducted on the effects of this particular type of incentive.

Three main findings can be outlined:

1. Call centres employees are comparing their incentives with those provided by other similar firms. If they consider that payment is higher in other firms, the motivation of employees is significantly reduced.
2. Interpersonal justice has an important role in enhancing employees' motivation.
3. Highly difficult goals discourage employees and reduce their work motivation.

On the basis of these results, the following managerial implications can be formulated:

1. Call centres should improve their employees perceptions about the external equity of their incentives.
2. Employees must be treated with respect and dignity by the team manager. The suggestions made by the manager should be formulated in such a way as to be perceived as constructive rather than critical.
3. The difficulty of established goal should not be too high, because this can significantly reduce the work motivation of employees.

Further studies should collect more evidence to validate the results of this research, and compare the effect of goal-related financial incentives on employees' motivation in various types of commercial organisations.

References

- ADAMS J S (1963). Toward an understanding of inequity. *Journal of Abnormal and Social Psychology*. 67(5). 422-436.
- ADAMS J S (1965). Inequity in social exchange. in Berkowitz. L (ed.). *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*. New-York. Academic Press. 2. 267-299.
- BAIN P and TAYLOR P (1999). An assembly line in the head : work and employee relations in the call centre. *Industrial Relations Journal*. 30(2). 101-107.
- BANDURA A (1986). Differential engagement of self-reactive influences in cognitive motivation. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*. 38. 92-113.
- BANDURA A (1991). Social cognitive theory of self-regulation. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*. 50. 248-287.
- BARTOL K M (1999). Reframing salesforce compensation systems: an agency theory-based performance management perspective. *Journal of Personal & Sales Management*. 19(3). 1-16.
- BORDACHAR-LAVAL C (2003). Mesure des effets des primes sur objectif sur la motivation individuelle et sur la motivation collective des salariés. Thèse de Doctorat en Sciences de Gestion de l'Université Toulouse I. France.
- BROWN G and MAXWELL G (2002). Customer Service in UK call centres organisational perspectives and employee perceptions. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*. 9(6). 309-316.
- CADIN L. PIGEYRE F and GUERIN F (2004). *Gestion des Ressources Humaines : pratique et éléments de théorie*. Dunod. Paris.
- COLQUITT J A (2001). On the dimensionality of organizational justice: a construct validation of a measure. *Journal of Applied Psychology*. 86. 386-400.
- FLOOD P. TURNER T. RAMAMOORTHY N and PEARSON J (2001). Causes and consequences of psychological contract among knowledge workers in the high technology and financial services industries. *International Journal of Human Resource Management*. 12(7). 1152-1165.
- FOLGER R et CROPANZANO R (1998). Equity and distributive justice as outcome fairness. in *Organizational Justice and Human Ressource Management*. Foundations for Organizational Science : A Sage Publications. 1-24.
- GOODMAN P S (1974). An examination of referents used in the evaluation of pay. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*. 12. 170-195.
- GREENBERG J (1986). Determinants of perceived fairness of performance evaluations. *Journal of Applied Psychology*. 71(2). 340-342

- GREENBERG J (1987). Reactions to procedural injustice in payment distributions: do the means justify the ends ? *Journal of Applied Psychology*. 72(1). 55-61.
- GREENBERG (1987). A taxonomy of organizational justice theories. *Academy of Management*. 12(1).
- KIM J S (1984). Effect of behaviour plus outcome goal setting and feedback on employee satisfaction. *Academy of Management Journal*. 27(1). 139-149.
- LAB-HO (2001). *Le travail au bout du fil; les salaires des centres d'appels: profiles. rémunérations. carrières*. Groupe Adecco. Villeurbanne.
- LEE T. LOCKE E and PHAN S (1997). Explaining the assigned goal-incentive interaction: the role of self efficacy and personal goals. *Journal of Management*. 23(4). 541-559.
- LEE D H (1998). The moderating effect of salesperson reward orientation on the relative effectiveness of alternative compensation plans. *Journal of Business Research*. 43. 65-77.
- LIVINGSTONE L. ROBERTS J and CHONKO L (1995). Perceptions of internal and external equity as predictors of outside salespeople's job satisfaction. *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*. 15. 33-46.
- LOCKE E A (1968). Toward a theory of task motivation and incentives. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*. 3(2). 157-189.
- LOCKE E A and LATHAM G P (1990). *A theory of goal setting and task performance*. Prentice Hall. Englewood Cliffs. New Jersey.
- LONDON M and OLDHAM G R (1976). Effects of varying goals types and incentive systems on performance and satisfaction. *Academy of Management Journal*. 19(4).
- LOWERY C M. BEADLES N A. PETTY M M. AMSLER G M and THOMPSON J W (2002). An empirical examination of a merit bonus plan. *Journal of Managerial Issues*. 14(1). 100-117.
- OLIVER R L and ANDERSON E (1994). An empirical test of the consequences of behavior and outcome based sales control systems. *Journal of Marketing*. 58(4).
- OLIVER R L and ANDERSON E (1995). Behavior and outcome-based sales control systems : Evidence and consequences of pure -form and hybrid governance. *The Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*. 15(4). 1-15.
- PERETTI J M (2004). *Gestion des ressources humaines*. Vuibert. Paris.
- ROUSSEL P (1996). *Rémunération. Motivation et Satisfaction au travail*. Economica.
- SMOOT D. A and DUNCAN P. K (1997). The search for the optimum individual monetary incentive pay system : a comparison of the effects of flat pay and linear and non-linear incentive pay systems on worker productivity. *Journal of Organizational Behavior Management*. 17(2). 5-75.

STEERS R M (1975). Task-goal attributes. achievement and supervisory performance. *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance*. 13. 392-403.

STEERS R M (1976). Factors affecting job attitudes in goal-setting environment. *Academy of Management Journal*. 19. 6 -16.

THIERAULT R (1983). *La gestion de la rémunération*. Gaëtan Morin Editeur.